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Congress of the United States

U.S. House of Representatives

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JANICE MAYES,
MINORITY CHIEF COUNSEL

June 22, 2006

CALL ON PRESIDENT BUSH TO SUPPORT HOPE FOR HAITI

Dear Colleague:

I am writing to ask you to join with me in sending the attached letter to the President, calling on him to take a leadership role in securing passage of legislation that would provide vital trade benefits to Haiti. The reasons for acting now include:

- President Preval's inauguration last month creates a vital moment of opportunity for Haiti and the United States to act.
- There is every indication that the HOPE bill enjoys broad bipartisan support in both the House and Senate.
- I received a clear commitment from Chairman Thomas in February 2005, that the HOPE legislation would be at "the top of the list" for action on trade legislation. This long predates Oman, Peru and other bills now being discussed by some as predicates for a vote on the HOPE bill.
- The legislation is needed to stem losses resulting from trade diversion from Haiti to China due to the end of quotas and possible unfair trade practices in China, as well as the CAFTA. (CAFTA's purported "hold harmless" provision in fact puts Haiti at a disadvantage with respect to CAFTA countries (Haiti's most immediate competitors).

I am also attaching a letter that I sent today to Speaker Hastert, Majority Leader Bohener and Chairman Thomas calling on them to bring the HOPE legislation to the House Floor on an urgent basis.

Please join me in signing the attached letter to the President.

Sincerely,


Charles B. Rangel
Ranking Democrat

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 22, 2006

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to encourage you to support on an urgent basis passage by the Congress of the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity Partnership Encouragement (HOPE) Act. This legislation is in the national security interests of the United States, the economic interests of the United States, the economic interests of the people and government of Haiti, and is just the right thing to do. For all these reasons, the legislation enjoys broad bipartisan support in both chambers.

The inauguration of President Preval creates a vital moment of opportunity for Haiti — and for the United States. During his trip to the United States just prior to his inauguration, President Preval made clear the importance to Haiti's economic revitalization of Congress' immediate passage of the Senate's HERO bill or the House's HOPE bill.

This moment represents a turning point in the United States' relationship with Haiti. To capitalize on this moment, Haiti needs to be able to create sustained economic opportunity for its citizens. One important component will be the jobs and investment opportunities created by the HOPE Act.

I urge you in the strongest terms to call — and work actively — for passage of this vital legislation before Congress adjourns for its recess on July 28. Together, I hope that we can move forward without another day's delay on this legislation that is so critical for so many in Haiti, and for the United States.

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JANICE MAYES,
MINORITY CHIEF COUNSEL

June 22, 2006

Honorable J. Dennis Hastert
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable John A. Boehner
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Bill Thomas
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker, Mr. Majority Leader and Mr. Chairman:

I am writing to urge that we move forward on a most urgent basis to pass in the House of Representatives the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity Partnership Encouragement (HOPE) Act. This legislation is in the national security interests of the United States, the economic interests of the United States, the economic interests of the people and government of Haiti, and is the moral thing to do. For all these reasons, the legislation enjoys broad bipartisan support.

With the recent inauguration of President Preval, Haiti stands at a critical crossroads. This is a key moment of opportunity for both the United States and Haiti. To capitalize on this moment, Haiti needs to be able to create sustained economic opportunity for its citizens. One important component will be the jobs and investment opportunities created by the HOPE Act.

On February 2, 2005, at the Organizational Meeting of the Ways and Means Committee, I sought and received explicit assurance from Chairman

Honorable J. Dennis Hastert
Honorable John A. Boehner
Honorable Bill Thomas
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Thomas that the HOPE legislation would be at "the top of the list" for Committee and Floor action at that time (more than 16 months ago). At that meeting, I raised the urgency of passing swiftly the legislation, which the Democratic Caucus had cleared for Unanimous Consent treatment on the Floor of the House on October 8, 2004. The Chairman responded that he would join me in making sure it's at the top of the list. Wanting to be certain that we were talking about Floor action, not hearings, I was gratified when the Chair added his comment that we needed action since we had already held hearings.

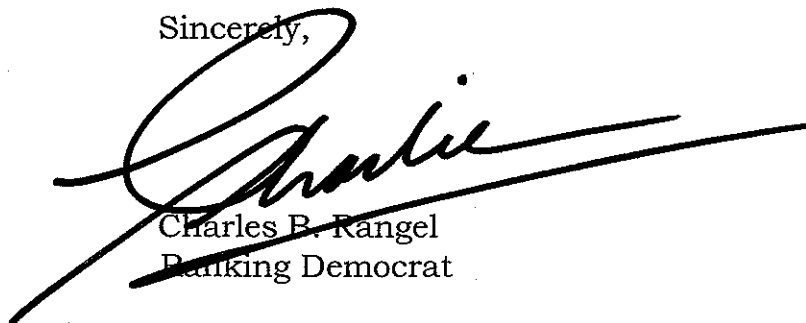
In recent days and weeks, there have been comments to the effect that trade legislation will be taken up on the House floor in the following order: Oman Free Trade Agreement (FTA), Peru FTA, then Vietnam Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR). When asked for the reason for this order, the comment has been given that this is the order in which these agreements were negotiated.

I don't agree with "packaging" vital trade benefits for Haiti with these other bills as a matter of principle, and I don't know that I agree that the order of negotiation of an agreement should be used mechanically to determine Committee and Floor action. It would seem to me that each agreement should be taken up on its own merits and that several key factors should be considered.

However, the decision has been made to use the criterion of order of negotiation to sequence trade legislation, then the HOPE bill was crafted on October 7, 2004, long before any of the three bills that are reportedly being mentioned. Accordingly, for this reason, if for no other, the HOPE bill should be moved first.

I hope that we can work together to move forward without another day's delay on this legislation for people in such great and extraordinary need, and which serves important moral as well as economic and national security goals of our country.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Charlie". The signature is written over the printed name and title of the signatory.

Charles B. Rangel
Ranking Democrat